

Members

Sen. Marvin Riegsecker, Chairperson
Sen. Connie Sipes
Rep. Sheila Klinker
Rep. Suzanne Crouch
Sally Lowery
Suda Hopkins
Betty Williams
Christopher Durcholz
Susan Ferverda
Bettye Dunham



COMMISSION ON MENTAL RETARDATION AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: October 16, 2007
Meeting Time: 10:00 A.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington
St., Senate Chamber
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Sen. Marvin Riegsecker, Chairperson; Sen. Connie Sipes; Rep. Sheila Klinker; Sally Lowery; Suda Hopkins; Betty Williams; Christopher Durcholz; Susan Ferverda; Bettye Dunham.

Members Absent: Rep. Suzanne Crouch.

I. Opening and Introductions, Senator Marvin Riegsecker, Chairperson:

Senator Riegsecker called the meeting to order at 10:15 A.M. and asked the members to introduce themselves. Senator Riegsecker said that this would be the only meeting of the Commission for 2007.

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.in.gov/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

II. Presentation by Mr. Peter Bisbecos, Director, Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services (DDRS), Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), on the State of DDRS:

Mr. Bisbecos provided the Commission with information on programs offered by DDRS. (Exhibit 1) During his presentation, Mr. Bisbecos informed the members that when an individual is no longer eligible for a Medicaid waiver slot, the slot stays unfilled until the next waiver year begins. That makes it impossible to spend one hundred per cent of the money allocated for the waivers. In answer to questions from Rep. Klinker, Mr. Bisbecos discussed the difficulty of finding additional funds to compensate caregivers. The state currently is conducting a study - objective assessment system for individual supports (OASIS) - to look at rates being paid to caregivers and means of providing incentives for caregivers to promote more stability in employment. In answer to questions from Senator Riegsecker concerning training of caregivers, Mr. Bisbecos reported that the State has a \$6.7 million, three year grant to fund training. Mr. Bisbecos stated that he will provide the Commission with information on where individuals from Silvercrest were placed and what services the former residents are now receiving in answer to concerns expressed by Senator Sipes about the closing of Silvercrest, will.

The members had a number of questions about changes in the First Steps program. Mr. Bisbecos asked Ms. Lora Miller, First Steps Director, to answer questions concerning changes in First Steps. There are fewer children enrolled in First Steps because of changes made in eligibility criteria. Ms. Miller reported that the decision to change the requirement had been made with the advice of a stake-holders group. In response to questions, Ms. Miller indicated that she would provide the Commission with minutes from the meeting where the decision was made to change the standards. Ms. Miller said that for children who are no longer receiving services, First Steps is trying to inform the families about programs where the children could receive services. Indiana's program now falls in about the middle of programs nationwide for the number of children served. Before the changes in eligibility, it was one of the top programs according to Ms. Miller.

III. Arc of Indiana, Ms. Kim Dodson, Director of Government Relations and Development:

Ms. Dodson made the following points:

- (1) Caregivers who are over 80 years of age and are providing care to persons with mental retardation and developmental disabilities are starting to receive additional services. It is estimated that there are over 400 caregivers over the age of 80 in the State.
- (2) Individuals who are between 18 and 24 who are aging out of the educational system are being targeted for services.
- (3) The shortage of direct caregivers continues to be an issue.
- (4) The General Assembly appropriated \$1million for guardianship programs. The money has not yet been released by the Budget Agency. (Mr. Bisbecos, in answer to questions, said that DDRS is working to develop plans for using the money. When those plans are completed, the money will become available. The money was not part of DDRS original budget requests so it is taking longer to gear up to spend the money. Concerns were expressed by the members over the delay.)
- (5) Providing tax credits for businesses hiring persons with mental retardation and developmental disabilities is a priority for the Arc of Indiana.

(6) When property tax reform is considered by the 2008 Session of the General Assembly, Ms. Dodson is concerned that continued funding for services that are now being funded by property taxes should not forgotten.

IV. Indiana Association of Residential Facilities (INARF), Mr. Jim Hammond, President and CEO:

Mr. Hammond stated that DDRS relations with providers have improved recently. He expressed concern that the State fell short in handling the closing of Silvercrest. The children still continue to have needs that are not being met. He commended DDRS for moving people off the waiting lists and for strides made to assist parents who are caregivers and are over 80 years of age. He believes that the OASIS project is an opportunity to improve services and said he has not seen the level of effort this great since the move to implement SEA 317 began several years ago. Mr. Hammond believes that the First Steps program needs to be stabilized. He reiterated Ms. Dodson's concerns regarding the danger of losing track of needed services when making changes to the property tax system. In response to questions, there was some discussion as to how the extensive support needs (ESN) homes fit into the service delivery system after the closure of Fort Wayne State Developmental Center and Silvercrest.

V. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 A.M.